
BOOK REVIEW

The Lockington Gold Hoard

*By Gwilym Hughes, Oxbow Books, 2000, 116 pages, ISBN 1 84217 017 1, Price £24.00**

This book describes the results of an excavation of an early Bronze Age barrow cemetery at Lockington, NW Leicestershire, England. The principal author is Gwilym Hughes and there are contributions from I Bevan, D R Hook, R Gale, J Greg, S Limbrey, J Meek, N D Meeks, L Mofett, A G Moss, A Monckton, S Needham, J Watson, D Williams, A Woodward and R Young. The book has 113 pages and most of the authors are well known.

Both the archaeological and technical details of the excavation are well described. There are chapters on gold and copper objects, pottery, flint stone, charred plant remains, pollen remains, buried soil and mound remains, soil phosphate analysis and charcoal identification - an exemplary piece of research, the methodology from which could be used beneficially in other excavations. The technical aspects of the printing are appropriate: glossy paper, with detailed drawings and photos. Every need is met!

In a specialist journal like *Gold Bulletin* we must pay most attention to the parts describing gold artefacts. S Needham of the British Museum contributed a 25 page article on 'The Gold and Copper Metalwork'. This has 9 black and white and 3 coloured illustrations and describes gold finds. A sub-chapter of 20 pages expertly written by D R Hook and N D Meeks, also of the British Museum, is entitled 'The Scientific Examination of Gold Armlets and the Analysis of a Fragment of a Dagger' and describes the analytical-

metallurgical work which was undertaken. Analysis of the armlets indicated 85 - 87% Au, 14 - 13% Ag and 0.3 - 0.1% Cu in the alloy. The reviewer must state, however, that even for the 'gold reader' the other chapters are also fascinating!

The armlets are rather similar to each other: about 4 cm in width and 8 cm in external diameter. Thickness at the rim is 0.3 - 0.5 mm and the weights 28 and 35 g. Accordingly both must have been made the same way: they are cylindrical bands of sheet metal with no evidence of a join detectable. In cross-section, one is corrugated, with seven raised ribs from a flat base. The ribs are evenly spaced with flat bands in between. The internal ribs each swell into lentoid bosses at eight points around the circumference. The angles between the ribs and the intervening flat areas are crisp and each is further defined by a neat row of pointilles.

The spacing varies between 11 and 14 dots per cm. The other armlet shows ribs only and no bosses (later called "lozenge-shaped swellings") or dots.

It would be interesting to have evidence of the method used to close the metal sheet to a tube. Hook and Meeks discuss the various possibilities. However, a look across the Channel to Brittany and France (1), or a careful X-ray study might have given some insight into this. The latter would have given information on the morphology of the sheets, with hammer marks and the local thicknesses. The folding of the rim could have been achieved using a wood filler which could then be burned out (2). The use of tin would give rise to interdiffusion with gold which can be observed optically.

'Early Bronze Armlets in Britain' are discussed in an 18 page section including drawings, graphs and distribution maps

- but again no mention is made of Brittany!

The bibliography seems to be complete, at least as far as the UK and Ireland are concerned. In the Appendix, 44 British and Irish armlets from the early Bronze Age are listed and classified. There are also lists of armlets with possible and doubtful assignments to the early Bronze Age, and it would again be useful to compare those found in Brittany, and for this we again need to consult C Eluere (3).

The booklet represents a fine example of successful co-operation between archaeologists and scientists on a rather small find. If presented in this way, it makes enlightening reading to all those interested in such endeavours and/or detective stories.

Christoph J Raub
Schwäbisch Gmünd

REFERENCES

- 1 C. Eluere and Ch. J. Raub, 'New Investigations on Early Gold Foil Manufacturing', pp. 45 - 54, in 'Archeometry '90' ed. E. Pernicka and G.A. Wagner, Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel, Boston, Berlin, 1991
- 2 C. Eluere and Ch. J. Raub, 'Beobachtungen zur Herstellung der Bronzezeitlichen Goldperlen von Esclazels, pp. 1 - 5 in 'TransEuropam, Beiträge zur Bronze- und Eisenzeit zwischen Atlantik und Altrai, Festschrift für Margarita Primas, herausgeg. Von Biljana Schmid-Sikimic und Philippe Della Casa, Dr Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn, 1990
- 3 C. Eluere, 'Les Ors Préhistorique. L'Age du Bronze en France - 2', Picard, Paris, 1982

* The book is available directly from
Oxbow books,
Park End Place,
Oxford,
OX1 1HN, UK